

Romans 13:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

Analysis

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another—Mēdeni mēden opheilete, ei mē to allēlous agapan (μηδενὶ μηδέν ὀφείλετε, εἰ μὴ τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν). The double negative mēdeni mēden (to no one nothing) is emphatic: no outstanding debts. Opheilete (owe) shifts from civic debts (v. 7) to personal finances—pay what you owe, don't accumulate debt. The exception: to agapan (to love) is a perpetual debt never fully paid. Allēlous agapan (love one another) uses the present infinitive—continuous, habitual love.

For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law—Ho gar agapōn ton heteron nomon peplērōken (ὁ γὰρ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἕτερον νόμον πεπλήρωκεν). The perfect tense peplērōken (has fulfilled) indicates completed action with lasting results. Agapē is not emotion but self-giving commitment to another's good. Love fulfills the law because the law's moral content is summarized in love for God and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40; Galatians 5:14). This echoes Romans 8:4—the Spirit fulfills the law's righteous requirement through love.

Historical Context

Paul transitions from civic duty (vv. 1-7) to personal ethics (vv. 8-14). The connection: both civil obedience and loving neighbors fulfill God's law. Debt was dangerous in the ancient world—defaulting could lead to slavery or prison. Paul's counsel is both practical (avoid financial bondage) and theological (the only legitimate perpetual debt is love). Early Christians were known for generosity and

care for the poor, widow, orphan—fulfilling the law's heart through Spirit-enabled love.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's command to 'owe no man anything' apply to modern consumer debt, mortgages, or business loans?
2. What does it mean practically that love is a perpetual debt—how do you 'pay' this obligation daily?
3. How does 'agapē' (self-giving love) fulfill the law in ways mere rule-keeping cannot?

Interlinear Text

μηδέν	μηδέν	οφείλετε	εἰ	μὴ	τὸ	ἀγαπῶν	ἀλλήλους·
any thing	any thing	Owe	G1487	G3361	G3588	he that loveth	one another
G3367	G3367	G3784				G25	G240
ὁ	γὰρ	ἀγαπῶν	τὸν	ἕτερον	νόμον	πεπλήρωκεν	
G3588	for	he that loveth	G3588	another	the law	hath fulfilled	
	G1063	G25		G2087	G3551	G4137	

Additional Cross-References

Romans 13:10 (Love): Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Galatians 5:14 (Love): For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matthew 7:12 (Word): Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Romans 13:7 (Parallel theme): Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

James 2:8 (Love): If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

Colossians 3:14 (Love): And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

John 13:34 (Love): A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

1 Timothy 1:5 (Love): Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: